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UNCLAS PARIS 000963

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR IO/T (BOOTH), EB/CBA, EAP/CM AND EUR/WE

COMMERCE FOR U/S ALDONAS

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: BIE: NEW PITCH FOR U.S. TO REJOIN

REF: A) MERTEN-BOOTH TELCON, 11 FEB 05

This contains a request for guidance, see para 5.

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: Wu Jianmin, the President of the International Exhibitions Bureau (or BIE, the organization responsible for organizing World's Fairs and other global exhibitions) has requested that the USG reconsider its 2002 withdrawal from the organization. He said that within the past six months he had been in touch with Senators Biden and Hatch and that he had received encouraging comments from Commerce Undersecretary Aldonas. He also implied that a U.S. decision to re-join would be particularly welcomed by China and other Asian countries. END SUMMARY.

2. (SBU) On 14 February, Ambassador and Econ Chief met with former PRC Ambassador to France (1998-2003), Wu Jianmin. Ambassador Wu said he was operating in his capacity as President of the International Exhibitions Bureau (which goes by its French acronym BIE). Wu said it was a pity that the U.S. was not part of an organization of which it was a founding member and which was growing and uncontroversial. Wu said he had been successful in increasing the size of the organization, which would soon have 100 members. He emphasized that BIE maintained a small permanent staff of nine and operated very efficiently. The annual dues of less than thirty thousand dollars per year were an extremely good value, he suggested. Without being a member, Wu added, the U.S. was ineligible to host an exhibition. The 2010 Shanghai exhibition, for example, would attract as many as 17 million visitors.

3. (SBU) Wu said that he had discussed U.S. re-entry into BIE with senators Biden and Hatch, both of whom were, according to Wu's characterization "pretty positive." Wu also noted that he had discussed the issue with Commerce Undersecretary Grant Aldonas in September 2004 at the "Asian Summit." He too was encouraging according to Ambassador Wu. Wu passed a follow-up letter to each official to Ambassador Leach and asked him to forward the letters to the senators and U/S Aldonas.

4. (SBU) Wu noted that he was also currently president of the China Foreign Affairs University and Vice President of the Foreign Affairs Committee (a committee he characterized as being "above the Foreign Affairs Ministry"). He said that he and many of his colleagues were pleased that "China was not an election issue" in the 2004 elections. He said he hoped that the U.S. and China could further consolidate their relationship over the coming four years. He added again that U.S. membership in the BIE would be something that would be seen as positive by China and other Asian countries where the organization is very popular. Ambassador Leach said he would enquire about the USG views on re-entry into the BIE.

5. (U) Request for Guidance: Embassy would appreciate an update on USG policy towards the BIE, including particularly any prospects for re-entry. Wu said we would be contacted shortly by the BIE Secretary-General to determine whether Wu's interventions with Senators Biden and Hatch and other officials had been effective in encouraging the USG to re-join.
LEACH